



Vermont State Workforce Development Board
Relocation and Recruitment Committee - Meeting Minutes
April 28th, 2022
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Committee Members in Attendance: Robert Peterson, Jen Stromsten, Christopher Koliba, John Burnham, Amelia Seman, Molly Mahar, Gary Scott, Patrick Amice

Guests in Attendance: Victoria Biondolillo, Abigail Rhim

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo began the meeting at 12:03 pm. She started by sharing the two functions of the committee. This includes the short-term goals of tackling smaller efforts and long-term goals of overseeing our relocation and recruitment efforts across the state. She also shared that the committee needs a chair in order to vote on things in the future. If anyone has interest, please reach out to her or Abby Rhim. She then shared a road map draft for the committee to review.

Chris Koliba noted that there are many states that provide marketing and relocation services. He stressed the importance of having a real person on the other line to provide these services. He noted that it would be wise to do some research regarding best practices in order to have effective outcomes.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed and noted the state's lack of coordinating the relocation system. While certain regional groups do good work, she agreed that we need to look at others to collect and understand best practices.

Chris Koliba urged the group to think of a centralized approach. He noted that our state is small and we do not need to work on a de-centralized system to provide relocation services.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed. She said that this committee's approach would focus on both best practices and how to hold both regional and state wide folks accountable in a coordinated, unified system.

Gary Scott stressed the need to include housing in our recruitment efforts. He suggested a database for available housing for folks to reference.

Victoria Biondolillo then shared her screen to create a whiteboard document to brainstorm ideas with the group. She began by asking the group where the committee would like their starting point to be.

John Burnham suggested the starting point be job available and the ending point be job filled. He then shared that everything between would include applying, training, daycare, housing, etc.

Molly Mahar noted the job gap and suggested the long term goal of adding 10,000 new people to the workforce each year.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed with this idea of establishing our actual numerical need. In order to achieve anything, we need to know exact numbers. She added that the Vermont Futures Project may have some of this data.

Jen Stromsten shared that we don't have a great sense of what future needs will be. While data has been generated based on national trends, she noted that there is value in identifying sector or regional data. She highlighted that in the past, when surveying Vermont businesses, for example manufacturers, that data has different outcomes than state data based on national trends.

Victoria Biondolillo liked the idea of surveying specific sectors.

Patrick Amice noted the importance of getting more young people to come to the state.

Victoria Biondolillo added that we need to understand who we should market to. If we can identify a general profile, we might be able to more successfully relocate them.

Patrick Amice added that some people might want to move out of crowded areas. If we can tap into those groups, we might have success.

Amelia Seman suggested that we think about Vermont's strengths. Outside of the typical lifestyle and environmental narrative, she suggested promoting the state as an accepting and welcoming place compared to other states, for example, with recent anti-trans legislation on the rise.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed. She also noted that in the beginning, we should identify existing infrastructure and what gaps we have. Is it communication, funding, coordination or other problems in our recruitment strategy? She then asked the group about larger goals.

Jen Stromsten touched on Chris' point regarding equalizing the differences. While certain regions are doing well attracting folks, others are not.

Victoria Biondolillo added that we could create a strategic plan for the entire state with recommendations with the committee to be approved by the whole board and sent to the Governor during a funding cycle.

Jen Stromsten then noted a study completed in upstate New York where university recruitment efforts were measured on a cost-effective basis. It was found that even while expending significant costs to recruit, potentially to fill a pivotal position, it still leads to hundreds of thousands of dollars of productivity. While we have a large workforce crisis to address, even if we fill a few people in crucial positions, it will have significant payout.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed and said that we should keep this in mind when thinking about equalizing regions and the value of people when we recruit them. The standard should not be just "x" number of people but rather the value of that person. She then summarized the two tracks developing throughout this meeting including infrastructure of services provided and marketing. To start addressing these tracks, we must understand the scope. This includes best practices and sector and regional polling.

Chris Koliba added that some of this research might have already been collected by Mary Anne Sheahan of Vermont Talent Pipeline. He also volunteered his own data services, including quarterly reports that can be generated and provided.

Victoria Biondolillo asked the group for next steps after data is compiled within the infrastructure track. She suggested getting contacts for folks within the system currently.

Chris Koliba suggested a resource plan. Whether it is state funds or federal grant programs, he highlighted the need for funding.

Victoria Biondolillo suggested the National Governor's Association and their grants in the future, in addition to any other funding opportunities.

Molly Mahar noted that if and when Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing receives resources, we must target them in order to collaborate.

Victoria Biondolillo then suggested that longer term, a strategic state plan should be our overall focus.

Chris Koliba urged the group to look at remote workers and their impact.

Jen Stromsten added that the ability to work remotely can be used as a recruitment tool for partners, families, etc.

Victoria Biondolillo asked the group for any other research ideas. She suggested that after getting an understanding of the work of Tourism and Marketing, what if the committee sets out to identify the profiles of a few groups that would likely move to Vermont include how to reach them, market to them and track them. All that being said, she stressed that we must look at the system and our infrastructure prior to marketing, otherwise, the marketing will not be of any use.

Chris Koliba seconded her point.

Victoria Biondolillo then told the group that the next meeting would focus on scope of infrastructure. Prior to this meeting, she will collect data on infrastructure to then identify gaps that need to be filled.

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Abby Rhim.

Abby Rhim, Executive Assistant

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